

Dear Sol,

6/6/90

Your brother-in-law may have retired from the practice of medicine but he is still a first-rate diagnostician!

You may recall that when you were here and asked me how I am and I told you about this swelling I've had toward the bottom of the sternum, where I had been cut for the open-heart surgery, he said it was a hernia. I told him my family doctor's associate had examined me and said he didn't know what it is but he was sure it wasn't a hernia.

Yesterday I finally got to see the local cardiologist. He told me also without looking at it that it is a hernia and then he told me to cough, saw how it puffs out, and repeated that it is a hernia.

He did not indicate any need for surgery, at least not now, and told me that the surgery is simple and requires only a day in the hospital.

It could come from so many things he doesn't know what caused it. Such things as merely straining in moving the bowels. I have abided by the restrictions that had been imposed and he did not add to any of them. The one precaution he gave me is to apply pressure at that point when moving the bowels.

I've thought about it a bit and made an appointment with the family doctor just to inform him and see if he has anything to say. I'm also going to write the surgeon at Johns Hopkins and see if he can see me when I'm there on the 19th. We'll feel more comfortable if he can see us that day and hear what he has to say about the present and about the future.

With me there is no simple surgery, in and out the same day. The problem with the blood will probably mean two days before and two days after the simplest surgery. I've twice been hospitalized for five days for what is normally out-patient surgery.

The indications are that this is not anything major but it also means that I'm not able to increase my activity, which I'd hoped to be able to do, and I do feel that the reduced activity has contributed to weakening me.

Otherwise I feel OK, as usual.

I didn't realize until we'd been home for a while and I was thinking about the examination yesterday that the cardiologist still had not told me what as a result of the surgery I should be careful about (other than not lifting more than 15 lbs) and how I can hurt myself. I'd written him and told him this lack of understanding troubles me but he did not address that. I suppose that this was not done at the time of the surgery, ~~and~~ meaning other than for a few days, because as someone put it, - just fell through a crack. Each doctor involved assumed another had done it. I think at Hopkins they expected the local cardiologist to do it.

Everything else must be OK. Last time I was there they'd had a 24-hour monitor on me and yesterday they did an EKG and because nothing was said about either I presume they were OK.

Now, on the animals we were talking about when you were here, some observations. A skunk has joined the racoon in feasting on the wasted bird food. One of the skunks, because last night I saw a different one, and one of the racoons ~~not~~ get along so well that the very night you were here they ate side-by-side. That skunk doesn't get scared. It was feeding about 5 a.m. yesterday morning, near the door, and because it wouldn't leave I had to delay going out for the newspapers. So small an animal and so unafraid. I guess they know the power of their spray!

Best to you all,

*Hardy*